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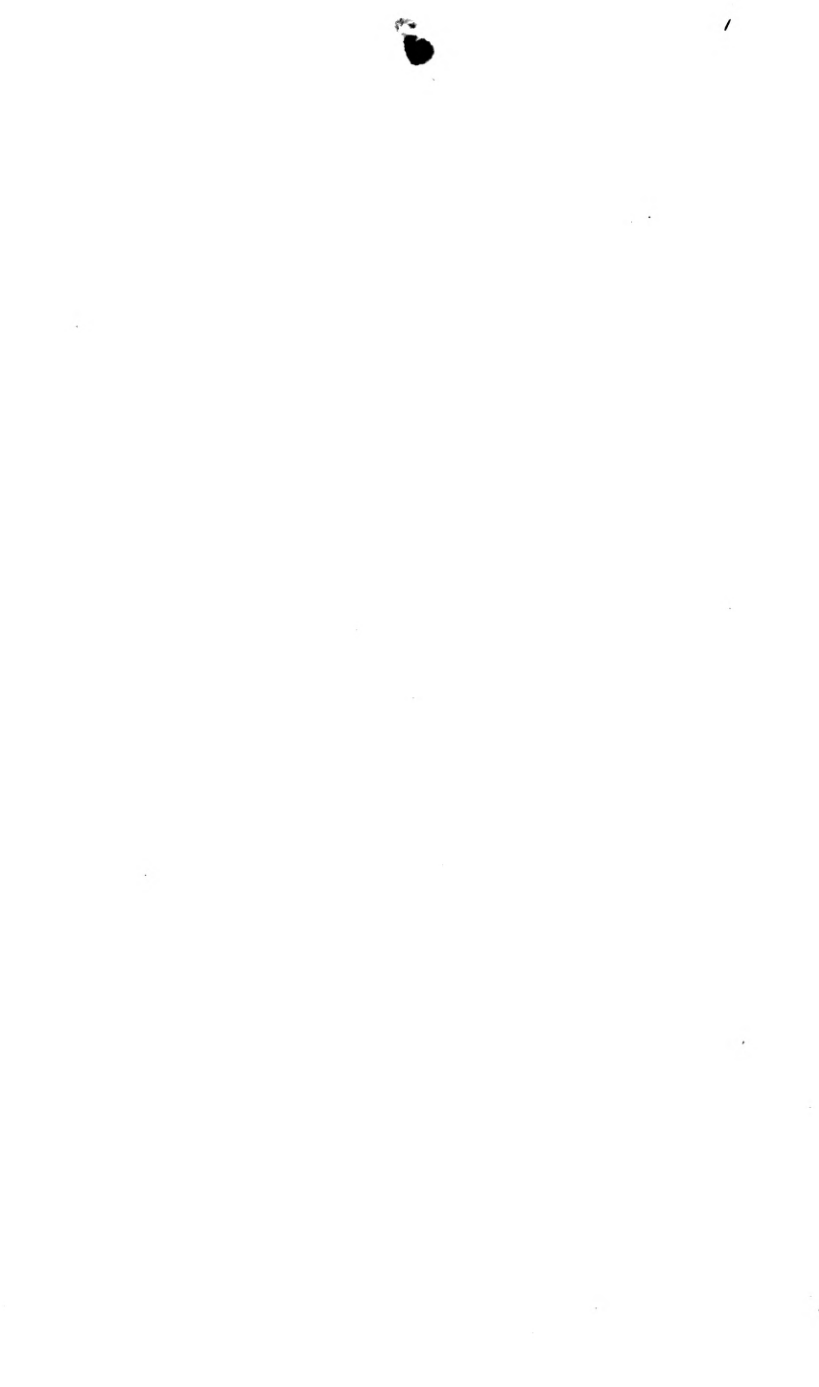
KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA



AN
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
CONDUCT
OF THE
MINISTRY, &c.



[Price Six-pence]



A N.

ENQUIRY

INTO THE

CONDUCT

OF THE

MINISTRY,

AND THE

Reasonableness of the PRESENT
DISCONTENTS.

Omnino qui Reipublicæ præfuturi sunt, duo Platonis Præcepta teneant; unum ut Utilitatem Civium sic tueantur, ut, quæcunque agunt, ad eam referant; obliti commodorum suorum; alterum, ut totum Corpus Reipublicæ curent.

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ENQUIRY
INTO THE
CONDUCT
OF THE
MINISTRY, &c.



AS any Person, unacquainted with the Factions and Animosities of *Great Britain*, to take a View of the anti-ministerial Writings, which have been published for some Years pass'd, he would doubtless conceive a very mean Opinion of the Liberties of *Englishmen*, and natural-

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ly enough conclude, that their Lives and Fortunes rested on the most rotten Security, the Will of an arbitrary Monarch, or the Indulgence of a Minister. He would imagine, that the *English* are now as abject Slaves, as the *Romans* were under the corrupt Reign of *Tiberius*; that we were not only oppressed, but reduced to the lowest Degree of Slavery, and denied the Satisfaction of complaining of our Oppressions, till, by Recollection, he gathered, that their own Writings were their own Answers, and the Complaints of our Slavery the best Demonstration of our Liberty. The Freedom of a State can never be in Danger, as long as the People are allowed impartially, and without Restraint, to examine the Conduct of those at the Helm, to follow them Step by Step

Step in all their Transactions, and openly and avowedly censure or approve them : for it must be confessed, that such a Practice as this proves, either that the Actions of Men in Power are such as they are willing to submit to the Judgment of the People, or that the Power of the Rulers is insufficient to silence the Clamours and Discontents of the People, in both which Cases Liberty must be safe and inviolated. The first Attempt of arbitrary Power always has been, and ever will be, the silencing of those who oppose its Measures, that so it may proceed in a Course of Tyranny, Cruelty, and Injustice, uninterrupted and uncensured. From hence I think it plainly appears, that it is impossible for a Freedom of uttering our Sentiments, upon the most important Subjects of Govern-

Government, to subsist under an arbitrary State; and consequently that a Privilege of this Kind, exercised by a People, argues the Enjoyment of the greatest Degree of Liberty according to the Historian, *rara Temporum Felicitate, ubi sentire quid velis, & quid sentias dicere, liceat.* On the other Hand, it can never be with Reason and Justice concluded, that whenever there are Clamours among the People, there is Corruption in the Administration; for if so, there never was an Administration incorrupt; it being impossible to instance from History any one Point of Time, when, under any Government, there was an universal Content in the People, and a general Satisfaction in the Conduct of the governing Powers. There are in every State Men unpreferred, and such Persons

sons generally imagine, they have as much Merit as those that are promoted, and doubtless very often they have. These People are apt to look with an evil Eye upon such Persons in the State, as have the Charge of distributive Justice, and consider the Neglect they lie under as Injustice offer'd them, and bear a Resentment accordingly. There are others who are desirous of Changes, that their own Friends may come into Play, expecting to enjoy some of the Benefits that are generally cast upon the Dependants of Men in Power. It is no Wonder then, if Persons in these Conditions attempt all Means of removing such as they consider as Obstacles to their Interest and Ambition, nor is it in the least surprizing, that they should be able, by Misrepresentations of Men and Things, by
artful

artful and subtle Applications to the Passions, to instill Jealousies and Suspensions into the Minds of the People, and engage a considerable Party in their Interest.

Faction has been never known to want a Pretence ; if the Behaviour of the Government is so intirely blameless, as to afford no Handle for their Malice, it is but shifting the Objection, and instead of traducing the Conduct, impeaching the Governours. Some of the ablest and honestest Ministers have fallen Sacrifices to groundless Clamours and Discontents. *Monf. de Wit*, who better understood, and more zealously pursued, the Interest of *Holland* than any one, was massacred by the Rage of a Faction abroad, and the Earl of *Clarendon* was impeached, and banished, by that of another at Home.

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Men in Power generally are, and ought to be, the natural Objects of our Jealousies and Suspicions ; for as they have generally proved themselves Enemies to the People, and Instruments of Oppression, we can never keep too strict a Guard upon their Actions and Conduct. Experience therefore, and the Behaviour of former Ministers, have justly awaken'd the People of *Great Britain* from reposing an implicit Confidence in those at the Head of Affairs, and from a Security which must necessarily prove fatal to a Nation possess'd of the Blessings of Liberty : but at present we seem to be fallen into the opposite Extream, and to have conceived a Prejudice and Aversion to Men in Power, which is unreasonable, useles, and unjust. Every Man, who is in the

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least conversant with the World, must know, that it is now become the Fashion to blame the Ministry, not only for their own Transactions, but for others in which they had no Hand or Concern.

I can say my-self, with the strictest Regard to Truth, that I have met with many, and these Persons in other Respects not void of Reason and Understanding, who have mentioned the numerous Debts and Taxes, under which the Nation labours, as so many Charges on the new Ministry; tho' it be evidently true, that they were contracted long before they had any Share in the Government; and tho' it be as true, that they ought to be a Charge upon No-body, as they were incurred necessarily, to

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preserve our Lives, Liberties, and Religion.

The same Observation may, has been, and can never too often, be made: when these Topicks came into Debate with Relation to the Affair of *Gibraltar*, it is said, *we ought to have procur'd a certain Space of Ground*, in Order to have secured us in the Possession of that Place; doubtless, it is true; but does the Neglect of this necessary Step of political Prudence affect the present Ministry, or those who had the Management of Affairs at the Time when that important Garrison was granted to us? Might not the Ministry at that Time have easily procur'd a Concession of that Nature, and have we had a Right to make such Demand since?

I am not in the least surpris'd to find Persons entertaining the Sentiments before mention'd; the Generality of the People too well know, that there are many and heavy Taxes subsisting; when the Debts that occasioned them were contracted, whether they have been increased or diminished since the present Ministry, in what Proportion they ought to be diminished, and consequently what Fund is established for that Purpose, they are intire Strangers to; and having never had Leisure, Opportunities, and Abilities, to make such an Enquiry, are reduced to take their Opinions from some favourite Writer, who represents these Matters, in a Manner calculated to serve his own particular Purpose and Interest.

So likewise it is in the other Instance of Discontent which I have

have mentioned; many Persons are justly of Opinion, that a proper District of Land is necessary to secure us in the quiet Possession of *Gibraltar*; they never consider when was the proper and only Time to have procured it, and who were the Persons that neglected that Opportunity; but being glaudably prejudiced in Favour of their own Country, and the Power thereof, conclude that we need but ask to have, and that whatever we have an Inclination for, we have a Right to, and are able to obtain: but every one who has considered these Matters duly, fully, and impartially, free from the Prejudices of Party Zeal, cannot but confess, that the Fund, appropriated to diminish the national Debt, has been religiously applied to that Purpose, unless it has been otherwise directed by
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the Wisdom and Authority of Parliament, which no Minister is (and I hope never will be) in a Capacity to dispute.

As to the other Point he must acknowledge, that however useful the Acquisition of a certain Space of Land contiguous to the Garrison of *Gibraltar* may be to us, yet that we have no Colour of Right for demanding it ; and therefore, to suppose that *Spain* would comply with any Proposal of that Kind, in the Condition it is at present, is ridiculous and absurd.

The Conduct of the Ministry with Regard to foreign Affairs has been likewise loudly complained of; they have been charged with making immaterial Alliances, and entering into Engagements contrary to the Interest of *Great Britain*; and the principal

pal Evidence that I have met with to support these Complaints, is the many and different Treaties which have been made within a small Space of Time : I look upon it to be impossible to say what is the Interest of *Great Britain*, without knowing at the same Time the particular State of foreign Kingdoms; what is the Interest of a Nation this Day, possibly may not be so a Month hence, because it depends upon external Accidents, which are ever fluctuating and changing: and therefore to lay down any general Rule, that it is the Interest of such a Kingdom to be in Alliance with such another, is a Proposition so absurd, that Nothing but a half-witted Politician can advance.

Now that which seems to me to be the principal Thing in View
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in making Treaties and Alliances, is the preserving a Ballance of Power betwixt several neighbouring Nations ; so that if one or more of them be urged by Ambition to invade the Possessions of another, there may be a sufficient Strength in Reserve to prevent the Effect of so pernicious Designs.

If this be true, it will follow as an indisputable Consequence, that whenever one or more of the Powers which are allied enter into other Alliances and Engagements, inconsistent with the first, the other contracting Powers must likewise, to preserve the grand Point, enter into different Measures and Engagements, and are at Liberty so to do : and therefore it can never be said with any Colour of Reason, that the varying of Alliances
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is a Thing blameable in a Ministry, unless it be shewed at the same Time, that the Situation of Affairs abroad did not require an Alteration in our Measures at Home. Any Man that considers Treaties and Alliances in this Light, and at the same Time reflects upon the various political Accidents which have happened in *Europe* within a few Years, and the different Measures which have been taken in foreign Courts, must be intirely satisfied with the Conduct of the present Ministry, who have acted with so much Skill and Dexterity, as to have brought the Nation under no Engagements inconsistent with its Interest; but, on the contrary, have placed us in so happy a Situation, that we must necessarily be, sooner or later, the glorious Instruments of restoring the Peace

of *Europe*, and composing the Troubles in which it is at present embroiled : and in this Place I should think it the highest Ingratitude to omit mentioning, with Honour, the great Indulgence and Condescension of his Majesty to his People at this critical Juncture, who has so far foregone the Exercise of his Prerogative, as not to engage on either Side in this troublesome Scene, till he has first consulted the Sense of Parliament : such a Behaviour as this must justly render him dear to his Subjects, is the strongest Testimony of the Regard he has to the Interest of the Nation, and ought to reflect some Honour upon those that advise him.

If we consider the Behaviour of the Ministry with Regard to that Part of their Administration,
which

which immediately concerns our home Affairs, I am perfwaded we fhall have as little Reafon to be exafperated againft them. They feem to have difcharged this Point of their Duty with an uncommon Degree of Skill and Integrity. All Offices of Truft, which have any Controul over the Liberties and Properties of the Subject, have been conferred where Merit pointed, and the Perfons promoted fuch, as were moft likely to difcharge their Truft with Honour and Honefty.

If we confult either our own, or the Hiftorians of other Nations, we fhall find that, whenever an Adminiftration has conceived a wicked Design of oppreffing or enflaving the Subject, the Perfons in that Adminiftration have taken Care to promote to Places of Truft and Power fuch only, as

were mean enough to submit to be made the infamous Instruments of effecting their execrable Purposes. Persons of the lowest Extraction, of the most desperate Fortunes, and of the most abandoned Principles, have been raised to the highest Dignities, for no other Merit than that of acting as they were commanded. Men of Integrity and Abilities were thrown aside, as unfit tools to work with.

I could instance some late Reigns, when the Scum of the Bar was promoted to the Bench ; when those, that no one would trust as Advocates, were placed in the Capacity of Judges ; when Law was the Will of the Prince, and Liberty and Property as precarious and uncertain, as the Tempers of those at the Helm. Then it was that the Judges did
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not scruple to declare, that the Crown had a Right of suspending and dispensing with all Laws; Justice was made a mere Commodity to be bought and sold, and all Judgments and Determinations were given according to Orders and Directions from Court. Grand Juries were discharged in an illegal Manner, and before the usual Time, for presenting Papists or otherwise performing their Duties.

Books written against Popery and arbitrary Power, and in Defence of Liberty and the Protestant Religion, were suppress'd; cruel Punishments were inflicted and excessive Fines imposed, not suited to the Quality of the Offence, or the Ability of the Offender. Bail was refused in those Cases where the Law allow-
it, or such excessive Bail was
demanded

demanded as amounted to a Refusal. Prisoners even before Conviction were treated with Threats and scurrilous Language; and in one Word, no Man's Blood was spared, which the King or his Ministers had an Inclination to spill. Our religious Rights were at the same Time no better secured to us. Persecution tyrannized daily, and every - where the poor Dissenters were prohibited from meeting together for divine Worship, subject to the Rage and Insults of an inflamed Mob, some of them crowded and starved in Jails, or forced into foreign Countries, and so in Effect banished their native Soil; to the great Decay of Trade, to the Dispeopling of the Kingdom, and consequently to the diminishing national Wealth. The Clergy out of Gratitude, and to
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make a fuitable Return to the Crown, preached up thofe abfurd and infamous Doctrines of paffive Obedience and Non-refiftance to the King's Commands, of whatfoever Nature, under the Penalties of Damnation ; and roundly afferted from the Pulpit, that Subjects were Slaves, and Kings Tyrants, by divine Charter and Appointment. It would be tedious and difagreeable to run through the long Catalogue of arbitrary Proceedings, that our Anceftors beheld under the Reign of fome Princes, whose Predeceffors had fo eminently fuffered for Attempts of that Nature, and the only Reason for which I mention thefe Inftances, is to fhew, the Liberties and Properties of *Englifhmen* are enjoyed under the prefent Adminiftration in the greateft Security and Extent. It
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is the Happiness of the present Age to behold the Reverse of this tyrannical Scene, to see Merit and Men of Worth promoted, and Ignorance and Iniquity in Contempt and Obscurity. The present Administration consists of Persons who have themselves no inconsiderable Share of Property, and must therefore be directed, both by Prudence and Interest, to deliver it free from all arbitrary Controul to their Posterity. To suppose Men in these Circumstances to have a Design of instituting arbitrary Power in the Crown, or Slavery in the Subject, is to suppose them not only void of common Honesty, but common Sense; the last of which I believe even their Enemies will scarce have Confidence enough to assert. Can any one say, that our Properties are in
 Danger,

Danger, while the Seals are placed in such unexceptionable Hands ; while the supream Seat of Judicature is filled by a Person who is allowed, by the unanimous Consent of all Parties, both in Abilities and Integrity, to be equal to that great Charge ? Or can we be in any just Apprehension for our Liberties, when *Hardwick* is at the Head of a Court, that has the peculiar Care of them ? Are not indeed the Courts in general filled with Persons of Ability and Integrity ? Has not Justice been dispensed for many Years pass'd with Impartiality and Mildness ? Crown - prosecutions carried on with Temper, and determined with Clemency ; Persons convicted of libelling the Government have suffered Punishments unprecedently easy ; nay, I will venture to say, even

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beyond their own Expectations or Defires. If we turn our Eyes upon the Church, has not the like Care been taken in ecclesiastical Promotions? Are there not more Persons of Learning among the dignified Clergy, than have been for many Years pass'd? Has any one of that Order distinguished himself by his Writings in Defence of our established Religion, without meeting with a suitable Reward? Has not all possible Care been taken to promote such only, who are free from any Seeds of popish Zeal, and spiritual Tyranny, and who allow a just and charitable Indulgence to those that dissent from them? By these Means Religion is defended in the best Manner, by Learning and Argument; Infidelity is not silenced, but answered ;

ed ; sometimes convinced, but never exasperated.

If we take a View of the Army, which is represented to be maintained on Purpose to enslave us, we shall find, that, in the Condition it is at present, there are no Grounds for any such Apprehensions; and that, as the Legislature has judged it necessary, for the Defence of the Nation, so the Administration has taken all possible Care, that it may never endanger that Liberty, it was intended to support. Most Persons, who have any Command of Importance, are Persons of noble Families and considerable Fortunes. This is so notoriously true, that it has been made a Foundation for Complaint, and many Persons have clamoured, that Promotions have not attended Length of Service,

and Seniority, but have been conferred in Consideration of the Dignity and Alliance of the Competitors. What Justice there is in such Complaints, is besides my present Purpose to determine ; but I think the Fact amounts to a Demonstration, that the Persons in the Ministry have no Intention of destroying our Liberties, when they take Measures so foreign to such a Design.

At the Head of the Admiralty is a Gentleman, not more distinguished for these Virtues which peculiarly concern his Profession, than those which adorn a private Life. He has, to undoubted Bravery, and consummate Knowledge in maritime Affairs, Humanity and every other Virtue join'd : but as his great Abilities and Integrity are confessed by all Parties, I shall
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only say, that we may expect to see by his Means, and the Assistance of the other Gentlemen in the Commission, the naval Power of *Great Britain* carried to the highest Pitch of Glory.

I have endeavoured to shew, in these short Observations upon the Conduct of the present Ministry, that they seem to have had the true Interest of *Great Britain* at Heart, both in Respect to their foreign Negotiations, and the Administration at Home ; that the principal Points, upon which a Discontent among the People has (not without some Success) been attempted to be raised, are either Transactions in which they had no Hand, or others, which by no Means deserve the Construction which has been put upon them. If these few Papers have no other Merits, yet I think
they

they may pretend to those of Brevity, and abstaining from all personal Abuse, two Virtues which seem to be much neglected by modern Writers. I shall only add, by Way of Exhortation to these Persons, whom I judge to have acted in the Manner above mentioned, that in a free Nation, as this is, no Ministry can be secure, but by a steady Pursuit of the Interests of the People; that that will be the most firm, as well as the most glorious Basis of their Power, and will, in all human Probability, defeat the Measures of their Enemies, how artfully soever conducted.

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